

crying ever since the devastating alarm went off. She clutches the two small ones in her arms and makes her way through the crowd while trying to make the stretcher attendants hear her trembling voice.

Finally, she reaches the stretcher and the children realize what all of the excitement is about. They recognize their father lying on the stretcher; his face is completely covered with soot and grime; his eyebrows and the front of his hair are singed down to mere stubbles. Both of his legs are tied to the stretcher because at the time of the explosion one of the supporting timbers fell across the lower part of his body. His wife nearly collapses when she first sees his injured body, but she soon regains her old strength plus some additional strength when she is told that he is only slightly injured. In other cases the victims have not been as lucky, and some bodies are brought up covered with a sheet or a blanket. Old women and recent brides learn at the same time of their loved one's future. Some find out fairly soon while others have to wait until the rescuers have made several trips. The majority of the families have happy reunions. Of the eighty-seven men in the mine at the time of the blast, only five will not return the following morning to once again descend into the depths.

The Handiwork of Age

Rita Anweiler

CAREFULLY opening the rickety drawer of an old mahogany dresser, I notice a small, yellowish Bible atop a cluttered stack of musty papers. The Bible's battered cover, cracked by the hands of time, resembles an aged man's face upon which are embedded deep lines. Each zigzag wrinkle etched upon this gilded cover is intricately interwoven into a myriad of delicate patterns. Along the frayed edges, unraveled threads suspend helplessly like the silky hairs of a spider's cobweb swaying gently in the breeze. The Bible's warped back reveals a binding that has become threadbare and timeworn from constant use, as the land becomes eroded from the constant tortures of the weather. At the bottom of this cover a tiny, plain cross, chained to a rusty zipper, no longer pulls the zipper shut.

Inside the Bible a bulk of yellow, wrinkled paper replaces the once smooth, white pages. This faded background, like a dim light, obscures the bold-faced print upon the pages but accentuates the numerous passages underscored in red. Brief notes, once painstakingly jotted along narrow margins, are now blurred as if smudged by the fingers of time. The remaining withered pages reveal crumpled corners and nicked edges like the jagged outline of a rocky cliff. Thus, time displays her handiwork, leaving only the inscription "Holy Bible" distinctly engraved in gold letters on the outside flap.